

REMARKS

Claims 1-10, 23-29, 53, 54 and 56-58 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 6 and 57 are amended in order to correct the wording of these claims. No new matter is added by the above amendments.

I. Consideration of References

The September 9 Office Action relied upon U.S. Patent No. 5,825,470 to reject claim 24. However, the Patent Office did not identify that patent on the Form PTO-892. The Examiner is requested to make the 470 patent of record. For the convenience of the Examiner, a Form PTO-1449 identifying the above-noted 470 patent is attached hereto. The Examiner is requested to initial and sign the PTO-1449, and return an initialed, signed copy with the next Patent Office communication.

In addition, Applicant filed an Information Disclosure Statement on October 14, 2004. The Examiner is requested to consider the references identified in the October 14 Information Disclosure Statement, and to return an initialed and signed copy of the PTO-1449 that accompanied that Information Disclosure Statement, with the next Patent Office communication.

II. All Pending Claims are Patentable

Applicant notes with appreciation the identification of allowable subject matter in claims 2, 9 and 25-28. Applicant respectfully submits that all pending claims are in condition for allowance for at least the reasons set forth below.

Claims 1, 5-8, 23, 53, 54 and 56-58 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,197,089 to Baker. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As shown in Fig. 1, Baker discloses an arrangement in which a wafer handling mechanism 16 in which a semiconductor wafer 40 is held in a chuck 42, is positioned beneath an exposure column 36. See col. 3, lines 49-53. The wafer handling mechanism 16 is

capable of moving the wafer 40 with six degrees of freedom via a Y stage 46, an X stage 48 and a substrate stage 50. See col. 3, line 56 - col. 4, line 11. As shown in Fig. 2, the overall lithography system 10 includes the wafer chuck plate 68 (located on the chuck 42 of the substrate stage 50), the exposure column 36, a pre-aligner 102, wafer carriers 86 and 88, and a robot mechanism 90 that can transport wafers from the carriers 86/88 to the chuck plate 68 after pre-aligning the wafers with pre-aligner 102. See col. 5, line 30 - col. 6, line 30.

The Office Action relies upon col. 5, lines 38-42 of Baker as allegedly disclosing the claimed airtight chamber, wherein an inner wall of a member which forms the airtight chamber is formed of or coated with a material involving little gas release. However, col. 5, lines 38-42 of Baker merely indicates that "[c]arriers 86 and 88 may include elevator mechanisms to permit the wafers 40 to be inserted into the lithography machine 10 environment without permitting external contamination, such as air, to enter the machine 10 environment." Thus, this portion of Baker does not disclose or suggest the claimed airtight chamber with an inner wall member which forms the airtight chamber being formed of or coated with a material involving little gas release. Accordingly, none of the independent claims (i.e., claims 1, 6, 23 and 56-58) of this application are anticipated by Baker.

Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Claim 3 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Baker in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,677,758 to McEachern et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

McEachern et al. does not disclose the claim 1 airtight chamber. Accordingly, claim 3 is patentable for at least the same reasons as claim 1.

In addition, while McEachern et al. discloses providing two substrate stages, claim 3 recites that the exposure apparatus includes "another movable stage which is different from the movable stage [of claim 1 and on which the second object is installed], and another airtight chamber which is different from the airtight stage chamber and which accommodates

the another stage" and that the first object is installed on the another movable stage. Thus, claim 3 (combined with claim 1 from which it depends) recites that each of the first and second objects (one of which is exposed with a light beam that has passed through the other (and thus, one is a mask and one is a substrate)) have their own movable stages and corresponding airtight stage chambers. As McEachern et al. only discloses a second substrate stage, the combination of Baker and McEachern et al. does not disclose or suggest the combination of features recited in dependent claim 3. Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Claims 4, 10 and 29 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Baker in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,508,518 to Kendall. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Kendall also does not disclose the airtight chamber as recited in the independent claims of this application. Accordingly, claims 4, 10 and 29 are patentable for at least the same reasons as their corresponding independent claims 1, 6 and 23. Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Claim 24 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Baker in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,825,470 to Miyai et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

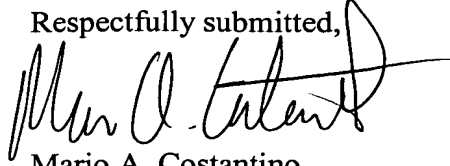
Miyai et al. does not disclose or suggest the airtight chamber recited in independent claim 23. Accordingly, claim 24 is patentable for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to independent claim 23. Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

III. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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MAC/ccs

Attachments:

PTO-1449

Petition for Extension of Time

Date: February 8, 2005

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